

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 543

By McNally

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Bill Wilcox of Oak Ridge.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Bill Wilcox, the official historian of the City of Oak Ridge; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Wilcox was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, a graduate of Washington and Lee University in Virginia, Bill Wilcox first arrived in East Tennessee courtesy of the United States government. A chemist by trade, Mr. Wilcox was brought in by the federal government to participate in the top-secret Manhattan Project; and

WHEREAS, Bill Wilcox was first assigned to work at one of the three large-scale production plants built in Oak Ridge, plants in which the uranium for the world's first atomic weapon was being enriched; and

WHEREAS, while working in Oak Ridge, Mr. Wilcox earned a master's degree in industrial management from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville; and

WHEREAS, during the years of World War II, Mr. Wilcox worked in two of the three plants and, following the end of the war and the closing of the Manhattan Project, he stayed on at Oak Ridge, serving as the technical director in charge of research and development at Y-12 and K-25; and

WHEREAS, following his retirement, Mr. Wilcox embarked upon a new project – the preservation of Oak Ridge's rich and storied history. To this endeavor, Bill Wilcox brought his voluminous knowledge of the role Oak Ridge played in World War II and his youthful enthusiasm, which endeared him to the city's residents and its visitors; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of his voluntary contributions to the city, Oak Ridge named Bill Wilcox as its official historian in 2006; and

WHEREAS, in his role as the Oak Ridge Historian, Mr. Wilcox was often consulted by the Oak Ridge Convention and Visitors Bureau and served as a keynote speaker to various groups and a liaison for travel journalists, and his exuberance shone through on film as well. He played large roles in several documentaries, including *Secret City: The Oak Ridge Story – The War Years* and *The Oak Ridge Story Part 2: 1945-2006*; and

WHEREAS, he also assisted in several History Channel, PBS, and Fox News productions and published a number of white papers, a history of the Y-12 plant, and the book *Opening the Gates of the Secret City*; and

WHEREAS, though he spent much of his time researching and documenting the history of Oak Ridge, Mr. Wilcox also wanted to ensure that future generations continued to be knowledgeable about Oak Ridge's story; and

WHEREAS, to facilitate this passing of historical knowledge onto others, he led K-25 bus tours during the annual Secret City Festival, founded the Oak Ridge Heritage and Preservation Association, and designed the Secret City Commemorative Walk, a monument enshrining the names of Oak Ridge's Manhattan Project workers and detailing the history of the Secret City between 1942 and 1949; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to awards and accolades, Bill Wilcox was given The Secretary's Appreciation Award, one of the Secretary of Energy's highest awards, in 2006, and a tourism award in 2010; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Wilcox leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Bill Wilcox, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family and friends of Mr. Wilcox.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.